

Technical assistance

Technical assistance can be provided by the Land Resources Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

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Further information

- SPC. 2010. Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy 2010–2015. http://www.spc.int/lrd/pafnet-publications/doc_download/1277-pacific-youth-in-agriculture-strategy-2011-2015
- SPC. 2015. Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023 <http://www.spc.int/images/publications/en/Corporate/Pacific-Youth-Development-Framework.pdf>

Endnotes

- 1 SPC, 2013. Land Resources Division Strategic Plan 2013–2017. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Suva, Fiji
- 2 SPC. 2013. National Minimum Development Indicators, available at <http://www.spc.int/nmdi/MdiSummary2.aspx?minorGroup=8>
- 3 UNICEF and SPC, 2011. The State of Pacific Youth Report 2011: Opportunities and Obstacles. UNICEF Pacific and Secretariat of the Pacific Community
- 4 Stephens, C. and Edwards, R. 2011. Review of the Pacific Youth Strategy 2010. Secretariat of the Pacific Community: Noumea.
- 5 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2011. Leaders' Communiqué of the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum, Auckland. Auckland 2011.
- 6 McGregor, A., L. Tora with G. Bamford and K McGregor, 2011. The Tutu Rural Training Centre: Lessons in non-formal adult education for self-employed in agriculture. Study requested by Fiji Ministry of Primary Industries and funded by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

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Youth in agriculture: Enhancing the value of farming jobs for youth

Summary

The issue of youth engagement in the agricultural sector strikes the heart of a very difficult issue. In the Pacific region, youth unemployment is significant. Coupled with low economic growth, limited job creation and opportunities in the formal sector for youth, the engagement of young people in the agricultural sector would seem a solution for many. Yet the contribution of agriculture to GDP is less than 3% in most Micronesian countries, less than 10% in most Polynesian countries, and less than 20% in most Melanesian countries.¹

In 2008, ministers for agriculture called for ways to support young people to take up careers in agriculture. In response, the *Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy 2011–2015* was developed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and endorsed by the ministers in 2010. *The Pacific Youth Development Framework (PYDF) 2014–2023*, tackles how to move forward from a strategic framework towards action, in environments with scarce resources for large-scale programming.

This policy brief draws on these and proposes a set of action-oriented steps to advance the formulation of an agricultural policy that aims to maximise youth potential to serve Pacific communities.

Key messages

- **Youth population:** Overall, more than half of the region's population is under 25 years. Young people are migrating to urban centres or emigrating to other countries in search of better education and employment opportunities.
- **Youth unemployment** is estimated at 23%.² Many unemployed young people are also unproductive, i.e. not engaged in any activity (paid or unpaid) that contributes to their personal livelihood, or that of their family and community. In Kiribati, 58% of young men aged 20–24 years are unproductive; in Samoa 46% and in Marshall Islands the figure is 44%.³ Youth unemployment represents a huge loss in economic contribution. This is estimated at approximately USD 828 million in 2011, increasing to USD 2.049 billion by 2015 and USD 3.18 billion by 2020,⁴ indicating significant untapped potential that has not been fully explored.
- **Job creation:** Young people have successfully called for regional leaders' commitments to youth employment in both formal and non-formal sectors.⁵ However, job creation is difficult, given the general trends of low economic growth across the region. The number of job seekers far outweighs the number of job opportunities.
- **Perceptions of agricultural work:** While the potential economic opportunities in the agriculture sector are recognised, this option is not considered an esteemed career. Despite the fact that up to 80% of Pacific Island populations live subsistence lifestyles,⁶ agricultural jobs are often perceived as 'labour' – options for those who have 'dropped out' of the formal academic system.
- **Benefits:** During the development of the Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy, youth consultations recognised significant benefits of agricultural activities: providing agriculture support to family and community, learning and benefiting from communal agriculture, and improving self esteem through communal endeavours.



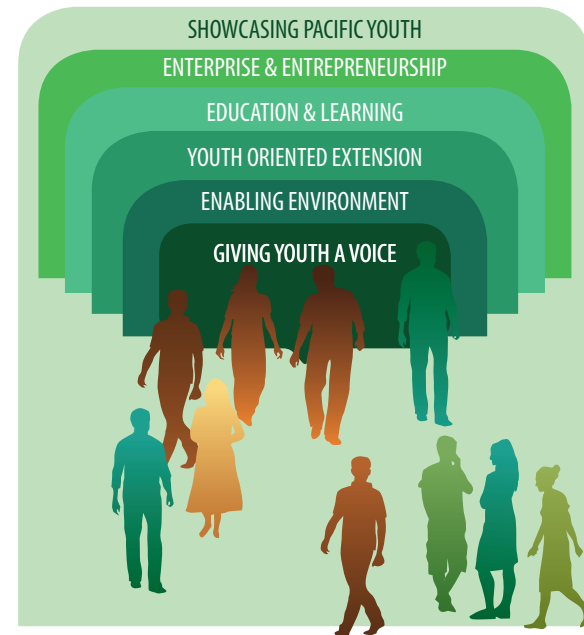


ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICE

- **Agricultural development** can be about making it more sophisticated and more capital intensive for large-scale production in competitive markets, or it can build on consortiums of small-holdings producing and value-adding for niche markets.
- **Best practice** in the region shows engagement of young people is maximised when young people are encouraged and enabled to lead their own initiatives as partners in agribusiness, not just labourers, and are involved at all stages of agricultural value chains, including the marketing.
- **Relevant training and education** to promote youth engagement in agriculture. Tertiary courses in agriculture have tended to direct graduates to office jobs in government departments, rather than to the land. More practical and entrepreneurial learning is needed in school curricula, from primary level through to tertiary.
- **Targeting initiatives to marginalised youth:** Broad economic strategies do not provide opportunities for all youth. Numbers of marginalised youth are a significant size: 'fall-outs' from education systems, youth living with disabilities, young women, rural youth and young people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. There are few targeted strategies reaching these key youth populations. While there have been some successful initiatives targeted at specific groups of marginalised youth, few have been scaled up to address the demand that exists.
- **Information, data and analysis** on the situation of youth and the impact of youth programmes and services are helpful in providing incentives to invest, and enable governments to comprehend the scale and nature of need. Policies seeking to engage youth in agriculture should understand who the target population is and how big it is, to provide evidence and stimulus for investment.
- **Perceptions of farming** need to change from it being a labouring job with low returns to it being a secure career option with potential for good returns, an option that inspires young entrepreneurs to become engaged in the value chain of agricultural production.



STRATEGIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



The *Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy 2011–2015* promotes five key inter-related components. At the heart of each component is the need to give young people a voice in the decisions taken that relate to their development. The *Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023* promotes broad strategies to support investment and ensure success. The following points summarise the recommended steps for policy development.

1. **Engage youth as partners**, including and especially the marginalised groups who would most benefit from an agricultural job.



"Allow young people to decide (bottom-up approach) where they want to invest in creates a sense of ownership, pride and commitment to work to achieve their objectives."

Keith Atalifo, Vanuatu

Tokasa Vadrassola, 22 years old, from Sabeto manages her commercial organic papaya farm, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and implemented by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

2. **Change the mindset towards agriculture** as a rewarding and respectable career option.



Photo: USAID

3. **Provide youth-specific services** to support them as agricultural entrepreneurs through agricultural value chains (including farming collectives, youth employment services etc).



Young people want to be treated as partners in all stages of agricultural value chains.

4. **Ensure market access** for agricultural production and community collectives.
5. **Promote agriculture as a profession** to encourage youth entrepreneurship through the use of success stories in the media, careers expos, information technology platforms, knowledge management, the social media, and by establishing regional and national awards that recognise achievements of youth in agriculture.



Young farmers participate in web 2.0 and social media training in Vanuatu

6. **Coordinate technical and financial assistance.**



The Tonga National Youth Congress produces organic coconut oil for export to Heilala Vanilla, supported by Oxfam New Zealand, the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Women In Business Development.

Photo: Oxfam NZ

7. **Strengthen evidence-base** to ensure that all stakeholders have data on the numbers of young people who are unemployed, skilled, unskilled, reside in rural areas, have access to land, etc.

8. **Build systems of accountability** to drive implementation and foster positive youth partnerships.

Establish or use existing national mechanisms to coordinate and guide implementation, such as an umbrella national agriculture youth steering committee, facilitated and guided by the youth and agriculture ministries. Membership should include leaders of rural-based youth groups, ministry of education, NGOs and faith-based organisations specifically working in rural agriculture development. These bodies should meet regularly to assess youth in agriculture activities, plan the sharing and efficient use of existing resources, and share information and lessons learnt from the youth in agriculture activities.

9. **Use community-based approaches** ensuring youth have space to lead their own agricultural initiatives within village contexts.

"Young people are the assets of any community; we must nurture them, listen to their needs, respect them, love them and they will make us, their elders, very proud."

Mr Alosio, Turaga ni Koro (Village Headman), Kanakana Village, Fiji